

Chorographers

Choriodraper

Monday, October 29, 1984

1984

Winterton's touch made 'em sparkle like stars

PROVO — The Young Ambassadors' soloists sang in their clear, pure voices. Speakers told of his diffident, shy, humble greatness. Countless friends silently wept.

They were saying goodbye to Dee Winterton, cruelly cut down by an automobile accident in the peak of his life, at 42, and to "his little sidekick," his bright, precocious, 11-year-old son, Jay Dee.

His legion of friends are still numb. They came hundreds of miles, some of them for his funeral. The old Sundance casts — from Jackson Hole, from California. Somewhere in Europe was our daughter, for whom he virtually became a godfather through the roles he tutored her in over the years at Sundance. By the time of the funeral, I am certain she did not know. By the time you read this, she will.

Speakers told, with even some sad laughter amid the tears, of the Winterton Hotel on Comanche Lane, a relatively little-known part of his life. Here, over the years, he and his wife, Maureen, gave shelter for varying periods to a great many young people who had no other shelter. Most were interested in theater. Some were not; they just didn't have any other shelter at the time.

Dee Winterton was really a shy man. I think he always was surprised, and even puzzled, at his own successes. Actually, they were always, to him, the successes of those he taught, his proteges, the countless young people who appeared in all of his productions — from a tent theater in Jackson Hole, to Sundance, to the Young Ambassadors — with whom he probably had found his greatest niche.



AS IT LOOKS
TO LUKE

theron
h. luke

There is one thing that hasn't yet been said, among all the tributes that have been paid him. I hope with all my heart I can say it, and say it right.

Dee Winterton enabled every young person who ever worked with him to see — and touch — the stars. And the process went one step further — he showed them how to bring the stars down for their audiences to see.

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From the chorus to the leads, for him they smiled brighter, danced with a little more beauty and precision, sang a little better. You never saw a bad Dee Winterton production. Some may have been better than others, but there was never a bad one.

Countless young actors, actresses and dancers dream of touching the stars. Considering all who try, a relative few do. But all who worked with Dee Winterton did. They may not have gone on to stardom or professional careers. All but a few turned to having babies and making a living, and kept only their memories. But if they were Dee Winterton memories, they will stay bright all their lives. He had that extra touch that demanded their best, plus his quiet genius that made their best always a little better.

Performers knew it. Audiences could sense it. It was Dee Winterton's gift to them, although many in the audience never knew its source. And he never worried whether they knew or not. He was one of those truly humble people to whom only results mattered, not the credit.

Many people have been involved with him in theater and dance for well over a decade. Some still are. His passing will leave a void in their lives that may never quite be filled.

The young people who worked with him worshipped him. The only thing it ever did was embarrass him. He was truly a shy, humble man.

His work, his quiet genius, may at least in part live on. Some of the best he taught, who are teaching now, will pass it on.

It will be his legacy to you and me.